

March/April 2022

The specialist international magazine for theme parks and FECs

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Universal Beijing Resort

Project Focus
Peppa Pig Park,
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Park Life
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Universal Beijing Resort
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Welcome to the Mar/Apr issue of InterPark magazine.

The focus of this issue is our technology special, which spans an incredible 13 pages!

The amusements and attractions industry is forever evolving – whether it's guest expectations, operator requirements, health & safety or the types of rides being installed. Through this dedicated technology focus, I have pulled together some of the latest technologies pushing the industry forward. A mix of product launches, case study examples and comment pieces from those in the know, turn to page 25 for some of the best technological insight the industry has to offer.

Elsewhere in the magazine we have a project focus on the new Peppa Pig theme park in Orlando, Florida. Having opened its doors to the public on 24 February this year, the new park has really focused its efforts on ensuring the park is accessible for all. As well as opening as a Certified Autism Center, a comprehensive Accessibility guide is being developed for the theme park. This planning tool will help all families become more aware of the many services and accessibility options that will be available at the park, so they can plan the ultimate day of adventure for their child. Turn to page 42 to read Emma Davidson's full report.

For this month's Open to Question interview, I caught up with Tom Mehrmann, President and General Manager at Universal Beijing Resort. Having had a colourful career within the parks and attractions industry, which all started back in 1977 when he took a summer job as a sweeper at Knott's Berry Farm, today, Mehrmann has just completed a two-year project to get Universal Beijing Resort up and running and open to the public. Turn to page 38 to find out what all these years in the industry have taught him.

And finally, we feature Linnanmäki Amusement Park, Finland in this issue's Park Life pages, starting on page 45. The oldest and most popular amusement park, located in the capital city of Helsinki, it is owned and operated by a non-profit Children's Day Foundation. Having opened its gates over 70 years ago in 1950, it has been attracting guests looking for fun ever since.

I hope you enjoy the read and I'll see you in a couple of months' time for your next instalment of all the latest industry news, park profiles and innovations.

Beth Whitaker

Beth Whitaker **Editor**

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Lara Croft statue unveiled in London

Little Lion Entertainment has teamed up with Paramount Pictures and Crystal Dynamics to bring a new representation of iconic adventurer Lara Croft to life in the form of a statue.

The installation of the larger-than-life size figure comes ahead of the opening of the new thrill-seeking experience, the Tomb Raider: The Live Experience.

The statue, which is carved out of sandstone, stands at 9ft-tall in London, at the entrance of the new attraction, which opens in April.

Tomb Raider: The Live Experience will take guests on a journey with teams of up to eight people joining Lara Croft on her pursuit to recover a powerful artifact that has fallen into the hands of a dangerous enemy.

On the unveiling of the statue, Tom Lionetti-Maguire, CEO and founder of Little Lion Entertainment said: "We're thrilled to unveil a new look for Lara designed especially for Tomb Raider: The Live Experience. The statue incorporates several of her iconic elements, such as her braided hair and double pistol holsters and blends her survival instincts and powerful confidence into a single visage."



NEWS IN BRIEF

UK Lancashire City Council has approved plans for the building of the Eden Project North. The £125m attraction will be located in the seaside town of Morecambe. The Eden Project, which is based in Cornwall, hopes the destination will be open to the public in 2024. Reports state that the council voted in favour of the building of the site, which will "combine exhibits, performance, learning, play, immersive experiences, world-class horticulture, live music, art, food, beverage and retail space."

EUROPE Festivities for Disneyland Paris's 30th birthday milestone kicked off on March 6, 2022, with new shows, special food and drink and a raft of surprises for guests. A new daytime show is being performed several times a day on the Central Plaza in front of the Sleeping Beauty Castle. The show sees Mickey Mouse and 30 other much-loved Disney characters and dancers' parade on colourful floats.

US Hersheypark, the family theme park in Hershey, Pennsylvania, is to introduce two new Jolly Rancher-themed rides this year. The Jolly Rancher Remix rollercoaster and the Mix'd Flavored by Jolly Rancher will be opening at the theme park in the summer. The amusement destination has also redesigned its Sidewinder coaster for Jolly Rancher Remix. The Remix is one of Hersheypark's 15 rollercoasters. It features music, lights and scents inspired by Jolly Rancher flavours, including watermelon and apple, alongside six inversions, which riders experience in just 90 seconds.



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PWL launches new branding and market strategy

Painting with Light (PWL) the Belgium-based lighting and video studio, has announced a rebrand with a new logo and website.

Designed to highlight the company's new strategic market approach, PWL is also deploying a new strategic direction, including market diversification, digitisation and full turnkey project management for visual experiences.

Luc Peumans, CEO of PWL, commented: "The past few years have challenged us to become even more agile and adapt faster to changing market needs. Our customers are asking for more digital and turnkey solutions, so we broaden our offering in this direction. We successfully turned our rehearsal studio into a chromakey TV studio with augmented reality technologies for virtual events and live broadcasting, extending this

towards fully equipped virtual studios for customers or companies at their location. All of this perfectly fits our mission of adding value to customers by creating engaging memories through powerful visual imagineering and sensory emotions."

With new programmers, designers, project and sales managers to accommodate for the increasing demand for immersive experiences in the likes of theme parks, events, shopping malls, cities, and other destinations, PWL has increased its team capacity by more than 50%.

Among the company's 2021 projects, included projection mapping for the Flander Vaccination Campaign, Winterlog in Bruges, and the interactive exhibition The Art Hour in Mechelen.

Accesso extends partnership with Merlin to provide ticketing solutions

Accesso has extended its ongoing partnership with Merlin Attractions Operations.

Continuing to provide its Passport ticketing solution to support Merlin's eCommerce and on-site operations, the extended agreement will see the company serve as the exclusive ticketing technology provider to 113 Merlin venues across 19 countries. The partnership has been agreed until August 2026.

The Accesso Passport ticketing suite features season pass management, on-site sales, online ticketing, third-party sales distribution and access control, providing guests with a seamless digital ticketing experience.

Steve Brown, CEO of Accesso, commented on the extended partnership: "We appreciate the trust the Merlin team has placed in our long-standing partnership, and we look forward to building upon our successful relationship for many years to come."

Nick Varney, Merlin Entertainments CEO, said: "Since 2015, Merlin has worked in partnership with Accesso to deliver the latest digital software across our global network, giving our guests an intuitive ticketing solution."

All Speeds coaster opens at Sunac Land Chengdu, China

All Speeds, the LSM double launch coaster, has opened to the public at Sunac Land Chengdu in China.

Built by Intamin, All Speeds boasts two launches to reach speeds of 117km/h. A track of approximately 1320-metres features a height of 30-metres on a relatively compact footprint, which sees the roller coaster cross its own path 116 times.

Riders are taken on a series of airtime hills, jumps and bumps, as they are hurled into new directions and experience a number of near misses.

The attraction comprises of four 16-seater themed trains with ergonomically shaped seats and over-the-shoulder-lap-bar restraints.

The front car is themed like the head of a bull with red LED lights to resemble eyes for a wild, out of control look.

Intamin says it is "thankful and equally proud of having contributed to the successful addition of Sunac Land Chengdu, China."

Innovative Leisure extend high ropes course at Universe Park

Innovative Leisure, suppliers of adventure attraction products for venues and operators, has extended its high ropes course at Universe Park in Denmark.

Centred on learning through a range of activities and experiences, in 2017, the park, which fuses technology and science, installed a two-level Sky Trail Explorer high ropes course.

Innovative Leisure has since been tasked with adding another level to the course, as a means of increasing capacity to accommodate for the park's visitors.

The Sky Trail is one of the most used attractions at Universe, hence why the operators wanted to see it expanded. The ropes course now boasts a third level, meaning it stands at 15-metres high and can accommodate up to 60 participants at any one time. Users can experience 37 different elements, including an all-new Sky Rail Zip on the third level, the first of its kind in Europe.

Troels Nim Andersen, project manager at Universe, commented: "In this project we added one more floor to the existing Sky Trail high ropes. We also focus more on science learning by moving in height. Along the way, we give guests hints at what happens to their bodies when they are high up and why it happens compared to the same activity on the ground. The new zip on the third floor is quite special. It's curved, so you start by setting off into nothing. The whole flying experience is amplified."



Blackpool Pleasure Beach opens new attractions and shows



Blackpool Pleasure Beach is opening for the 2022 season with a number of new additions. At the time of print, the first of the park's White Knuckle Weekends was set to get underway in February, while Valhalla is back for the summer season. This high-speed, multi-sensory dark ride takes riders on a journey through scenes of fire, snow and mist, as visitors journey in Viking longboats. The UK's first and only double launch rollercoaster Icon is to be twisted for the forthcoming season with ENSO. The Icon's rear seats have been adapted so that riders are able to twist and spin freely throughout the duration of the ride.

As well as this, the Pleasure Beach's purpose-build ice theatre, Pleasure Beach Arena, will be home to this season's show – Rapture by Hot Ice, the world's longest-running ice show. Guests will also have the chance to experience the Big One – the UK's tallest roller coaster – like never before on a guided 'Walk the Big One XL' tour. Guests will be able to climb the lift of the ride and experience the iconic roller coaster from a completely new perspective.

IAAPA Expo Asia cancelled

IAAPA Expo Asia has been cancelled for the 2022 edition.

Hong Kong SAR, China was the chosen venue for the event this June. However, the continued impact of Covid-19 in the region has meant that the event cannot go ahead.

"Providing an opportunity for our members to meet face-to-face, conduct business, and move our industry forward has always been a top priority for our association," said Hal McEvoy, President and CEO, IAAPA.

"Our team has been working tirelessly on this year's Expo in Hong Kong. Unfortunately, the ongoing impact of Covid-19 in Hong Kong, and continued travel and business restrictions have reduced the feasibility of hosting a successful Expo in Asia in June.

"After careful consideration, and with significant input from members, exhibitors, the IAAPA Board of Directors and our team, we have decided it is best to cancel this year's IAAPA Expo Asia."



June Ko, vice president and executive director, IAAPA APAC, added: "We understand the importance of sharing this decision in a timely manner. We want to ensure our exhibitors and members have time to adjust their plans for the year. The Asia-Pacific region is an important part of the global attractions industry, and we remain committed to serving our members by providing opportunities to share, learn, buy, and connect with each other through other events and channels. We are developing alternative in-person events for our members to network in the APAC region in 2022 and will shift our focus to creating an outstanding IAAPA Expo Asia 2023."



LCI Productions installs 3D projection show in Bournemouth, UK

LCI Productions, a design-led production and installation company, has installed the UK's first permanent outdoor 3D projection mapped show.

The show is in East Bournemouth and will play every day until 8pm. It will regularly update throughout the year so that guests keep returning to see new instalments.

The project was launched by Bournemouth Coastal BID, in partnership with Bournemouth Towns Fund. It is part of a bid to increase visitor numbers to Bournemouth out of season and encourage visitors to stay for longer and explore the coastal area.

LCI Productions installed a digital projection M-Vision 23000-WU DPL projector in an upstairs space to ensure the 18x11-metre show isn't knocked out of alignment and is protected from the weather.

A Brightsign media player and show controller computer with remote dial-in capacity for the LCI team, ensure the content runs smoothly.

The launch show boasted a 'Love Boscombe' theme to coincide with Valentine's Day. The images displayed on the screen represented the Boscombe seafront and artwork by local residents.

Rob Paul, of LCI Projections, commented: "This project is an example of retail-tainment at its finest! We have created a guest experience that is akin with what you would expect to experience at a theme park with the combination of 3D visuals and surround audio immersing the audience into the scene. This is a fantastic initiative to encourage people to visit their local high street and the evolving show experience will keep them returning time and time again."

New ride area set for Legoland Deutschland

A new park area is heading to Legoland Deutschland for the 2023 season. The action-packed area will feature a themed roller coaster that cannot be found at any other Legoland in the world.

The area is costing more than €15.5m, the biggest investment of the parent company Merlin Entertainment into the theme park since it was opened 20 years ago.

The area will extend over 12,000sqm and construction is already underway. Preparations to the ground are being carried out between the existing Pharaohs' Land and the Kings' Castle in the bordering Legoland Holiday Village.

Dirk Schlecht, technical director at Legoland Deutschland, commented: "We are excited to build this first rollercoaster of its kind in a Legoland Park and fulfil the long-fostered desire of our guests for a park expansion with a high action and energy level.

"The coaster will also be accessible for children from primary-school age, a first thrill they can share together with their older siblings – an experience for the whole family."





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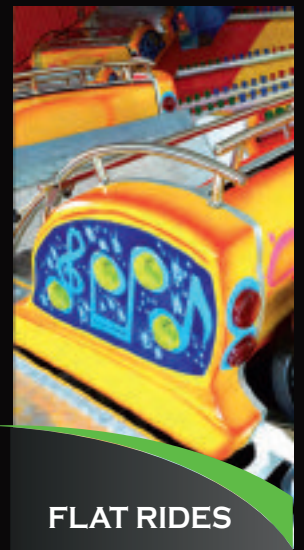
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Thorpe Park announces record roller coaster

By David Whitworth



Thorpe Park has announced plans for a new hyper roller coaster, billed as the tallest in the UK.

Code-named Project Exodus, the ride would stand at 236ft (72-metres) and achieve the record as the tallest roller coaster in the UK – taking the mantle from the Big One at Blackpool Pleasure Beach, which tops out at 213ft (65-metres). It is a record which has stood for nearly 30 years dating back to 28 May 1994.

A Thorpe Park statement confirmed the proposal of its new addition: “We are delighted to announce that we are preparing to add an exciting new roller coaster to Thorpe Park resort’s portfolio of world-class attractions. This key investment and the introduction of new facilities is critical to the resort’s recovery from the Covid-related impacts on the business.”



A public consultation was undertaken for four weeks from 10 December through to 7 January for members of the public to give their thoughts on this potential mega coaster. Artists’ impressions show a compact coaster consisting of a menacing black steel frame. The hyper coaster will include various elements, including an outward banked track on departing the station, an over bank following its first drop, a huge non-inverting

loop, several inversions and a splashdown feature. The coaster will fly low hovering the lake and in all, the site will cover 1.7 hectares. There will also be a new waterside viewing area built so guests can get some great snaps of this colossus ride. Thorpe Park says that, “visitors will be transported from the station structure around a new track over water in an exhilarating experience.”

The identity of the ride manufacture for Project Exodus remains under wraps at the moment with an announcement due in the Spring when planning permission is set to be adjudicated.

This latest development is part of a major drive for the park to bounce back from the pandemic, plans which are propelled by the owner of Thorpe Park, Merlin Entertainments. Furthermore, it would be the park’s first coaster to be built since it launched The Swarm a decade ago.

The proposed ride would be located in the north-west corner of the park (south-east on a traditional map), where the Old Town area lays. Current rides including Lumber Jump, The Rocky Express and Timber Tugboat are to be removed to make way for the latest attraction.

The park is also planning to construct a new plaza consisting of a food and beverage outlet and photo shop to complement Project Exodus. The park is mindful of protecting the surrounding area and the ride’s track will be incorporated to blend aesthetically with local views. With the attraction located within the green belt, the construction has been approved from an environmental standpoint and according to the Thorpe Park timeline, the application to the council will be submitted this Spring with a final decision on a planning permit from the council issued by the summer. Once planning permission has been given the green light, construction would begin later this year.

If approved, Thorpe Park’s skyline would be transformed dramatically and would be a landmark attraction in the UK theme park industry. Meanwhile, this latest attraction would complement more than 30 existing rides and seven roller coasters it has on offer.





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MIDDLE EAST

Jais Sledder toboggan opens in UAE

Jais Sledder toboggan ride opens in Ras Al Khaimah, capital of the Emirate of Ras Al Khaimah in the UAE.

The toboggan reaches speeds of up to 40km/h and boasts views of Jebel Jais, the highest peak of the UAE, which is part of the Hajar mountain range.

Riders are taken along a 1,885-metre track, on sleds designed for two people. The attraction is located in the Jais Adventure Park, alongside the world's longest zip line and the world's first Bear Grylls Explorers Camp.

Raki Phillips, CEO of Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority, commented on the opening of the new attraction: "It has been an incredibly busy time as the Emirate continues to develop and build on its reputation not only as the adventure capital of the Middle East but as a family-focused destination.

"Jais Sledder forms part of the half a billion dirham investment announced in 2021, in partnership with RAK Leisure and RAK Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and is the first of 20 planned projects throughout the Emirate."



Spinning Coaster 3000 opens at Motiongate Dubai

The Spinning Coaster 3000, the world's fastest single car spinning roller coaster, has opened in the Lionsgate zone at Motiongate Dubai.

The attraction has been created by Maurer Rides and is part of Dubai Parks and Resorts' latest expansion plans.

The ride is based on the heist thriller *Now You See Me* and takes guests through a series of optical illusions and immersive storytelling. Reaching speeds of up to 70km/h, riders race to escape security and expose the

activities of a criminal mastermind. The ride features a loop, a figure of eight, a steep Immelmann turn with 80° banking and S-curves, as riders are hurled along the track at an incredibly fast pace.

Denis Pascal, general manager at Motiongate Dubai at Dubai Parks and Resort, commented: "The record-breaking coaster aims to reimagine the whole coaster experience for visitors to a more immersive one. Now You See Me: High Roller is designed to be imaginative, immersive, and extravagant to make riders feel they're living in the film and to generate many repeat rides from teens and adults alike."



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Dollywood recognised with 2022 Top Workplaces USA and Forbes awards

By David Whitworth

Dollywood Parks & Resorts has been named as a 2022 Top Workplaces USA award winner. This prestigious award follows the park being recognised in the 2021 Top Workplaces category. In addition, Dollywood is the only theme park to be granted this award.

The Top Workplaces initiative spans over 15 years and considers over 20 million employees. It recognises the top organisations across 60 markets for regional Top Workplaces awards, with which Dollywood represents. Over 42,000 organisations took part in the Top Workplaces USA survey. Winners of the Top Workplaces USA list are chosen based solely on employee feedback gathered through an employee engagement survey.

Tim Berry, Vice President of Human Resources discusses Dollywood's successes: "We are thrilled and humbled by the recent awards we have earned regarding our host culture here at Dollywood Parks and Resorts. "Last year, we earned the Top Workplaces award from the News Sentinel, as well as recognition from Forbes as one of 'America's Best Midsize Employers.' Now that we're added to the 2022 Top Workplaces USA list, it affirms our daily efforts to make Dollywood a great place to work. The fact these awards are based on survey results from our employees lets us know they love our caring culture as much as we love caring for them.

"Throughout the park, you'll see what we call our 'hosts' who treat one another as family, and that - combined with our benefits and competitive pay - really make this a unique place to work. When a host starts at our company, they immediately become part of the Dollywood family. There is no doubt that the family culture of caring and love for one another is what distinguishes us from other organisations. We work hard to provide great benefits and an amazing place to work, but at the end of the day, it is the atmosphere cultivated by our hosts that really make Dollywood what it is each day. And when our hosts feel appreciated and part of the family, they do all they can to pass that care on to our guests."

Dollywood clearly fosters a successful working environment, which can be demonstrated with the values it instills to its employees. They receive a variety of unique benefits including access to the Dollywood Family Healthcare Centre along with complimentary Dollywood and Dollywood's Splash Country admission for family and friends. Employees are provided free meals for every working shift and also take part in Dollywood's Park Perks programme, which provides free or reduced admission to a large number of regional attractions, theatres and experiences.

The park takes its employees' wellbeing of paramount importance and offer a comprehensive benefits package, including medical, dental and vision, available for qualified full-time employees. Dollywood also pays a portion of childcare costs for hosts.

Dollywood has won many prestigious awards since it opened in 1969.


And another accolade the park received recently was to make the Forbes list of America's Best Midsize Employers for the second consecutive year. 500 companies were entered into the list which Forbes compiled, in which Dollywood appeared in a respectable 141st position, and one of only 12 Travel and Leisure companies. "I can't describe how honoured we are to have been nominated with this award. Being recognised regionally is amazing, but to be named on multiple national lists truly is humbling for us," said Berry.

Earning these awards show it is a proactive park which are constantly progressing and thinking of new ways to bring further cultural harmony to the resort. An educational initiative was recently announced whereby the park will cover 100% of tuition, fees and books for any employee who chooses to pursue further education. The programme, on offer for its employees from the outset, officially launched on 24th February for all seasonal, part-time, and full-time employees at Dollywood. "Our goal at Dollywood Parks and Resorts is to provide the best possible experience for both our guests and our hosts," said Eugene Naughton, President of The Dollywood Company. "We know when our hosts are happy and feel cared for that they are going to pass that along to our guests. The creation of the programme allows another avenue for us to care for our hosts."

Through these multiple successes, Dollywood continues to be a thriving theme park, attracting three million visitors annually. It is all music to the ears of famous country and western singer and co-owner of The Dollywood Company, Dolly Parton. The park lives up to its slogan of 'Love every moment', and it is clear that Dollywood appreciates its staff and vice versa. Its park values have ensured that they are rightfully recognised with these latest accolades from Top Workplaces and Forbes.



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RiseNY flying theatre opens in Times Square, New York



RiseNY, the first flying theatre in the United States' northeast, recently opened in Times Square.

The attraction relays New York city's fascinating history through a series of museum galleries. The attraction culminates with a simulated flight, taking visitors on a sweeping journey over views of the 9/11 Memorial, Brooklyn Bridge and other iconic New York landmarks.

The development of RiseNY was a collaborative effort between Running Subway and Super 78, which worked on the design of the attraction. Having specialised in visual effects and attractions development for 25 years, Super 78 is one of the industry's leading creators of flying theatre rides; while visitors board Brogent Technologies' 46-passenger, m-Ride flying theatre ride vehicles, which are designed to pivot 180°.

Brent Young, Super 78's co-founder and president, commented on the new attraction: "There is great depth to the attraction. On average, guests spend 60 minutes exploring RiseNY, but some linger for longer. Visitors can access and unpack lots of layers. The story, itself, is timeless. It's the story of New York."

Accelerate Indoor Speedway implements Semnox's Parafait



Accelerate Indoor Speedway, providers of indoor go-kart racing experiences, has implemented the Semnox Parafait venue management platform at a go-kart racing location in Mokena, Illinois.

The Mokena venue provides guests with a high-speed electronic go-karting experience, alongside arcade games, axe throwing experiences, and a multiplayer virtual reality arena.

The installation of the Parafait system follows an earlier installation of the system at the Autobahn Indoor Speedway's Dulles and Jacksonville venues, where Accelerate implemented Semnox's illuminated-LUMIN-enabled RFID tap-to-play debit card systems for the arcade, redemption, and self-service kiosk, along with Parafait cloud-based management and reporting.

David Larson, managing partner at Accelerate Indoor Speedway and Autobahn Indoor Speedway, commented: "We are excited to expand our partnership with Semnox at our Chicago area location. The ability for us to eliminate multiple systems by also replacing our legacy restaurant POS and our original arcade card reader system with Parafait was a huge benefit for us. In addition, the Parafait RFID LUMIN readers are more reliable than the readers that we originally installed."

accesso partners with Parks! America for ticketing solutions



accesso, technology solutions provider to amusement parks around the world, has teamed up with Parks! America to provide ticketing solutions to the company's portfolio of Drive-Thru and Walkabout Adventure Zoo Animal Safari parks.

The three-year agreement will see accesso's Passport ticketing solution support both online and on-site operations.

With the accesso Passport eCommerce ticketing suite, visitors will be able to choose from the site's multiple admission, pass and group reservation options. The accesso Passport ticketing suite provides an easy front gate point of sale, designed to improve sale results.

Mark Whitfield, executive vice president at Parks! America commented on the partnership: "With accesso's ticketing system in place, we know that our guests will enjoy a top-quality online experience, no matter how or where they make their digital purchase."

"By partnering with accesso, our team can place even more focus on what we do best – providing exceptional animal safari experiences to our guests during a time of growth for our company."

InterCard provides cashless technology

Elev8 Fun, a new FEC concept that provides more than 25,000sqft of entertainment, games and experiences, has chosen InterCard as its cashless technology provider.

According to David Goldfarb, CEO of PrimeTime Amusements, and consulting partner of Elev8, InterCard was selected based on the company's reputation in cashless technology.

"We needed a vendor that can deliver the overall cashless technology package and InterCard ticks all the boxes. Furthermore, we need a live support team that will be there 24/7."

"Customer satisfaction increases immediately when they can check their [card] balance on the floor rather than having to wait in line at the front desk. When they go into the redemption prize centre guests can swipe their card, see how many tickets they have and go right back out to the game room."

Elev8 Fun's first location opened in Stanford, Florida in December 2021. The site comprises of retro arcade games, bowling, a multi-level go-kart track, interactive mini golf, rope courses, laser tag, and dining areas.

Elev8 Fun plans to open two more locations of its planned chain of mall based FECs in 2022.





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Live orchestral performances head to Hong Kong Disneyland

New live orchestral performances are heading to Hong Kong Disneyland Resort in the Spring.

At the time of print, the 2022 Disney in Concert: A Magical Celebration event is scheduled for April 30 and May 1, 2022. The performance will feature the Hong Kong Symphonic Winds (HKSX) Symphony Orchestra, with conduction by Fung Ka King.

The new performances follow a series of live orchestral events that took place at Hong Kong Disneyland in December 2021 and saw the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra presented A Magical Nighttime Symphony, featuring well-known Disney characters and local artists, including Cantopop singer Kay Tse.

Michael Moriarty, managing director at Hong Kong Disneyland Resort, shared his enthusiasm for making such performances part of the park's entertainment: "We are very excited working with the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra, the flagship orchestra of our city."

"It brings all the magical elements together here in Hong Kong Disneyland: the spectacular night view of the castle, high-quality orchestral live performances and beloved Disney songs and stories."

Legacy Entertainment brings Hollywood Magic to PIK-2



Legacy Entertainment, a California-based entertainment design firm, has been appointed as entertainment consultant for Indonesia's PIK-2, an all-new city currently under construction near Jakarta's international airport.

Legacy Entertainment, which is currently celebrating its 20th anniversary year, will oversee the design and creation of the rides, attractions and shows that PIK-2 will be home to.

Stretching over 5,100 acres and along 4km of white sand beaches, PIK-2 is the size of San Francisco. The development will comprise hotels, arenas, stadiums, hospitals, schools, residential areas, and world-class entertainment.

Marcus King, Legacy Entertainment's chief projects officer, and one of the firm's owners, said: "PIK 2 truly exemplifies the 'City of Tomorrow,' so it's only appropriate that it would also be home to the entertainment of tomorrow, as well."

Luna Park Sydney announces AUS\$30m investment



Luna Park Sydney, the heritage-listed amusement park located on Sydney Harbour, has announced a major update, with a AUS\$30m investment.

The upgrade will include the installation of nine new rides, including thrill rides, children's rides and an anchor Intamin coaster, the Big Dipper, with an entire section of the theme park completely redeveloped.

Luna Park opened in Melbourne in 1912. A second Luna Park opened in Adelaide in 1930, while Luna Park Sydney opened in 1935. This latest project is the biggest extension to Luna Park Sydney since it opened.

Commenting on the redevelopment, Peter Hearne, managing director of Luna Park Sydney, said: "We bought a little mini coaster, our Little Nipper kiddie coaster, from Preston Barberi; a family coaster, the Boomerang, from Gerstlauer; a hot racer from Intamin, and six rides from Zamperla: the Cloud Nine Samba Balloon, the Bug Mini Ferris Wheel, the Freaky Frogs Jump Around, the Loopy Lighthouse Jumpin' Tower, the Silly Sub Crazy Bus, and the Sledgehammer thrill ride."

"The exciting thing from our perspective is that we are now, effectively, a four-coaster park. We started off with the little Preston & Barberi mini coaster, which is themed as a shark. From there, we go to our Boomerang, the Gerstlauer family coaster, and then to our existing Wild Mouse."

Star City re-opens following fire

Star City amusement park in Pasay, Philippines, has re-opened following a two-year hiatus and fire, which destroyed parts of the park.

The family entertainment destination was originally scheduled to reopen in January but was delayed in the wake of rising Covid-19 cases in the country after the Christmas holidays.

Guests aged 18 and over have to be fully vaccinated to gain entry to the theme park and the venue will be operating at a maximum 50% capacity in its indoor areas and at 70% capacity in its outdoor areas.

The 35,000mt.sq amusement park in Pasay is located in the reclaimed area of the Cultural Centre of the Philippines Complex, which is part of Bay City and is owned by Star Parks Corporation, a subsidiary of Elizalde Holding Corp.





Premier Studio Ghibli theme park arrives autumn 2022

By David Whitworth

Award-winning Studio Ghibli will open its first theme park in November.

The Japanese theme park, based on the works of Miyazaki Hayao and his animation firm Studio Ghibli, have confirmed that the themed areas of Ghibli's Grand Warehouse, Hill of Youth, and Dondoko Forest will be the first to open its fantasy like doors on 1 November, 2022. Many of Studio Ghibli's iconic films will feature, including *Howl's Moving Castle* (2004), *My Neighbour Totoro* (1988), *Princess Mononoke* (1997) and the Oscar-winning *Spirited Away* (2001).

The park will cover 200 hectares (494 acres) and is a JPY34bn (\$295m) joint venture involving Studio Ghibli, the government of Aichi Prefecture and the Chunichi Shimbun newspaper. Construction began in 2019 with Ghibli handling the creative side of the project. Once all themed sections are complete, the target date for opening would be by the end of autumn 2023. Entry to the public Expo Park itself will remain free but there will be admission fees for entering the Ghibli-themed areas. Visitor numbers are expected to total around one million in the early stages and hit 1.8 million annually when all sections are finished.

With close consultation with the surrounding forest, the park is being built on and within the grounds of Aichi Earth Expo 2005 Memorial Park (Moricoro Park), to the east of its nearest main city, Nagoya – a three-hour train journey from downtown Tokyo.

"Ghibli's Grand Warehouse is an indoor facility that stores all the studio's secrets, from large to small artefacts and exhibits from past Studio Ghibli

movies," says the park. "You will find fantasy-filled exhibitions such as Robot Soldier, Cat Bus, and kid-sized film studio exhibitions."

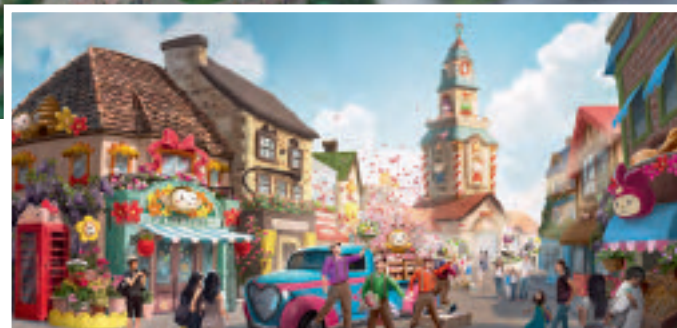
As well as the first three themed worlds to have been announced, there are a

further two in the pipelines, which are to be called Valley of Witches and Mononoke Village. All these attractions are based on the studio's most famous films and the themed areas are to blend in with the existing nature in the park. Local media in Japan suggest that there will be rides at Studio Ghibli, however, there will be no usual roller coasters. Nature trails are to be given greater importance instead with no trees cut down. The park encourages guests to "Take a stroll, feel the wind, and discover the wonders."

Studio Ghibli theme park aims to marvel guests through a mixture of animatronics and nature. There will be a life-size, 16-metre tall version of *Howl's Moving Castle*, which will be fitted with moving cannons resembling eyeballs. Visitors inside the castle will be welcomed to peek into the magician's quirky bedroom. Another area will be Ghibli's Grand Warehouse. A former swimming pool, the indoor area will house an exhibition room, a children's playground, shops and restaurants, plus a warehouse to store all the exhibits. The exhibition room will accommodate a small cinema fitted with 170 seats. This colourful setting will incorporate both Japanese and Western architectural designs. There will also be a re-creation of the sky garden from the movie 'Laputa: Castle in the Sky', with a 6.3-metre scale of the film's airship, which will hang from the ceiling.

"Welcome to the great warehouse of Studio Ghibli's secrets and iconic architectures you have seen in the films," promises the park. A Hollywood blockbuster of entertainment awaits us this autumn.





First Hello Kitty hotel set for 2025

By David Whitworth

China's first Hello Kitty hotel is set to open in 2025 at the Sanya Hello Kitty Resort.

The Hello Kitty hotel will have 221 rooms and villas and feature Hello Kitty designs and various Sanrio characters. The facilities will include a spa, swimming pool, fitness centre, a ballroom, three restaurants and a bar. Hong Kong-based real estate company Keystone Group will work alongside Hyatt Hotels Corporation on this project to bring the Hello Kitty hotel to life.

Both parties spoke of this development and the expectation of the landmark Hello Kitty Hotel. Firstly, Jeffery Pun, chief executive officer of Keystone Group, said: "As Keystone Group continues to grow our hospitality portfolio across Greater China, we are excited to extend our collaboration with Hyatt. Sanya Hello Kitty Hotel will leverage our respective strengths in developing and managing world-class hospitality projects to

exciting new project, which will retain a unique identity while providing the JdV by Hyatt brand's signature guest experience that is inclusive, free-spirited and distinguished by heartfelt and joy-driven service." (Quotes via www.ftnnews.com)

An intellectual property licensing agreement was signed between Keystone Group and Sanrio (Shanghai) International Trade in July 2019, granting Keystone Group access to more than 400 trademark Sanrio characters, many of whom will feature in the Sanya Hello Kitty Resort and Hotel.

The theme park itself at Sanya will be ready a year earlier in 2024. It will be a 52-acre site built in the coastal region of Haitang Bay at a cost of \$620m (£457m). The visitor attraction will boast a mixture of rides and attractions for all the family. According to artists impressions, the buildings will be adorned with colourful designs, which feature a volcano, a pyramid and a themed castle. The Hello Kitty image will be present in all areas of the park, including a giant Hello Kitty sphinx.

This will be the second Hello Kitty theme park resort to be built in the country after the launch of its Zhejiang Province resort, which opened its doors in 2015 to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the creation of the Hello Kitty character.

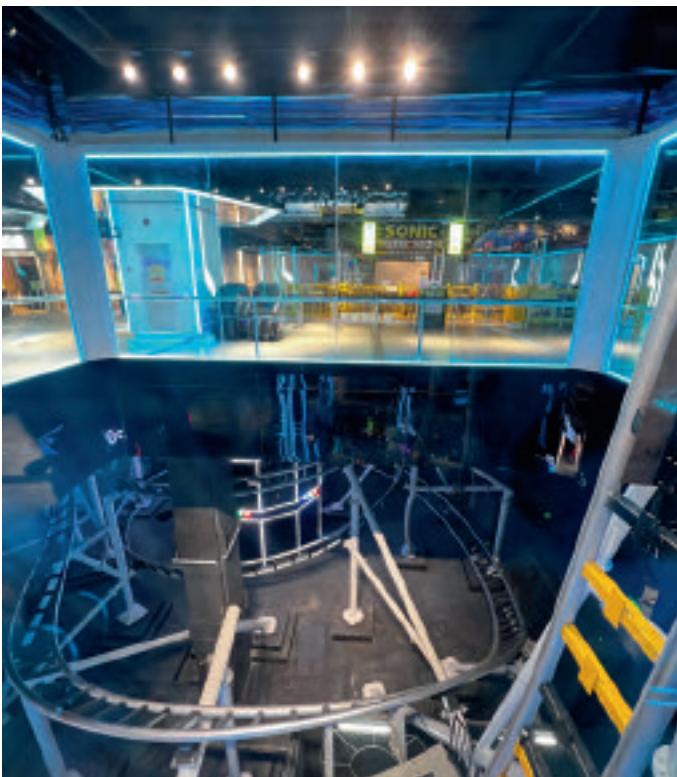
Hello Kitty Theme Park Resort states that: "Across its design, build and operation, the Hello Kitty Theme Park will follow only the highest international standards set by the hospitality industry. Licensed by Sanrio, which owns the intellectual property rights to Hello Kitty, this vibrant theme park and resort project will also incorporate the leading international trends in hospitality and local cultural elements of Hainan." The new resort promises to 'provide visitors with an exciting range of entertainment, performances, cuisine and shopping.

The popular Hello Kitty character originates from Japan and is recognised worldwide for its clothing, toys and media productions amongst other ventures. The character is based on a young girl called Kitty White and follows the main protagonist and her unmistakable red bow on a family-based adventure around London.



offer guests a truly unique experience as they unwind and rejuvenate with their favourite Sanrio characters. We believe that the hotel and Sanya Hello Kitty Resort will become icons in Hainan's tourism landscape and enable us to tap the growing demand for high-quality travel experiences in this region."

Meanwhile, Stephen Ho, president of Growth and Operations, Asia Pacific of Hyatt, said: "We are delighted to be working with Keystone Group and are grateful to them for entrusting Hyatt with the first Hello Kitty-themed hotel in this fast-growing market and expand our brand portfolio in China. We look forward to bringing to life well-loved Sanrio characters in this



Jinma applies LSM launch system to coaster portfolio

Jinma has announced it will implement Linear Synchronous Motor (LSM) launch systems to its wide range of roller coasters, following a successful installation at Joypolis Guangzhou.

In order to integrate diverse elements in limited spaces, Jinma has adopted a LSM launch system on a customised coaster at Joypolis Guangzhou, rather than the traditional chain lift or friction wheel launch.

With two LSM launch systems on the track, each is responsible for launching trains at a specific speed, while integrating seamlessly with the audio and lighting systems of the ride. Jinma's engineers worked to combine multi-elements such as track-changing, spirals, banked turns, and a half-U run into this LSM spinning roller coaster. Penetrating the 10-metre-high upper floor, the speed of the LSM launch system is fast, yet easily controlled and virtually maintenance-free as there is no touch or friction between the trains and the launch system.

The magnetic field generated on the tracks interacts with the magnets under the trains, and the generated driving force powers the trains, allowing passengers to experience tonnes of fun.

Jinma's Block systems enable two trains to run on the track separately and safely to improve the load capacity of the coaster and maximise the resources of the park.

With full mastery of LSM technology, an innovative R&D team, and strong production capacity, Jinma says, "it is confident of successfully incorporating LSM technology into its wide range of roller coasters," and is already working on two more large-scale LSM coasters.

One is an immersive roller coaster, powered by LSM, with suspending seats, 570+ metres long and 26-metres high track, combining HD films and special effects, which will create an immersive experience for passengers. The other is much larger, with a track of 770+ metres long and 40-metres high, allowing for 20 riders per train, and including some of the most thrilling LSM launch system elements. Once completed, it will be the largest LSM coaster built so far by Jinma.

WATER PARKS



New attractions for Lincoln Water Park

Lincoln Water Park, in UK, is set to reopen in May with new attractions and activities. The family water park has undergone major investment and refurbishment ahead of its opening in the spring.

The destination will feature an extended outdoor facility with an inflatable course, a floating rope course, and an integrated wall climb and zip wire known as the Water Warrior.

The park will also feature two new jump stations and new large slides and swings to make the site accessible to everyone.

The investment was partially made by Lincolnshire County Council as part of a Covid-19 recovery grant for local businesses.

A spokesperson for Lincoln Water Park said: "We've been looking

long and hard at trying to broaden the appeal of the water park so that people can make a day of it if they wish, rather than just travelling to us for the one activity.

"We're also really conscious not to offer activities that are already catered for in the area and the floating ropes course with climbing walls and zip line seemed to be a perfect fit.

"We tried to remain true to the original design while doubling up on key features. We're also introducing two new jump stations and we've doubled up on the main challenge features. This will ensure there will be no waiting time for guests' favourite features to become available during a session.

Legoland New York opens with new water playground

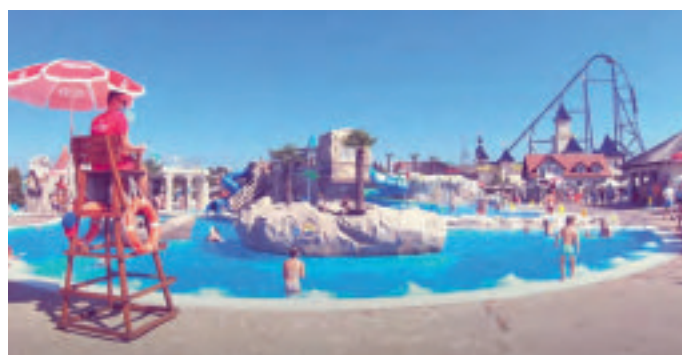
Legoland New York is set to open its doors for 2022 boasting a new water playground attraction.

The water playground at Lego City is to feature a Lego boat building and racing experience, alongside a waterslide and giant water bucket.

Also in the pipeline at the theme park is a series of new shows: Academy of Arrr, Detective Trace and Earth Beat, which will be performed at new venues located inside Lego Pirate and Lego City.

Stephanie Johnson, Legoland New York's divisional director, said: "We're always looking to add something new to the Legoland New York experience. For our first full operating season, our team has been hard at work on new shows, new attractions and new offerings for our biggest fans.

"Everything we do is for the love of fun and we aim to build unforgettable memories that will keep families coming back to our resort again and again."



Energylandia introduces 16 new slides

Energylandia, Poland's largest theme park, is to expand with the addition of 16 new water slides.

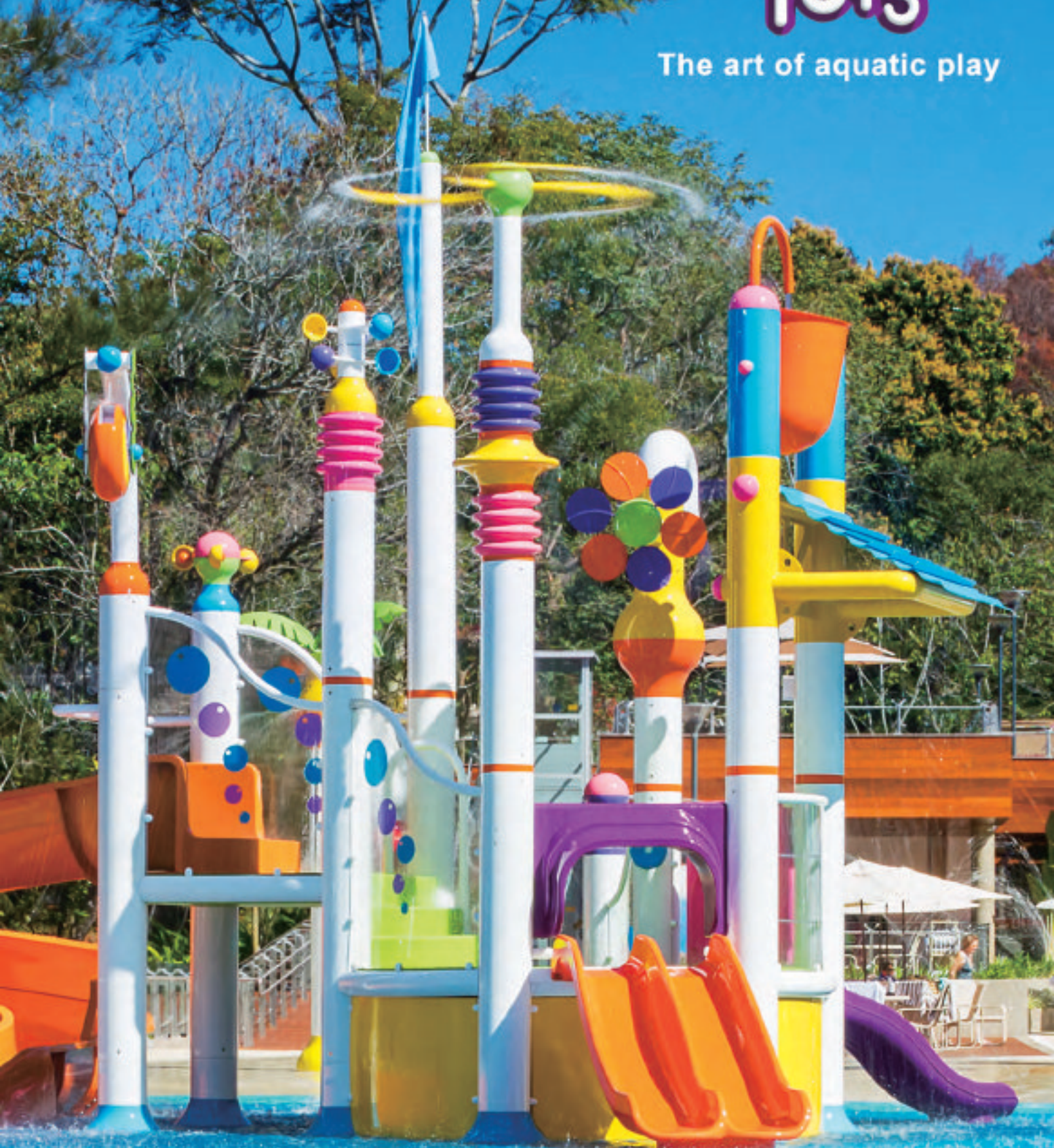
The new attractions will be part of the theme park's new Bamboo Bay Zone, which will be home to a slide tower known as Oasis with six water slides.

In total there will be 36 slides on offer at the Energylandia theme park when the Bamboo Bay land opens in 2022.

The amusement site's water park opened in the summer of 2016. The zones already at the water park include Tropical Fun, Exotic Island, and the Big Milk Water Park, home to the Big Milk Ship water slide. Tropical Fun features 14 slides and Exotic Island is home to five waterslides.



The art of aquatic play



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WATER PARKS



BoldMove launches Waterslider VR

Boldmove Nation has launched WaterSlider VR, a new motion and media-based attraction.

WaterSlider VR combines physical thrills with virtual reality. Riders sit on a life raft that can seat up to four people and one wheelchair. The life raft is integrated in a sea container which houses the cabling and technical components.

The WaterSlide VR features a tropical beach party setting, with music to match. Visitors can use VR goggles to enjoy a virtual ride into the depths of the ocean. During the three-minute simulation, riders experience the hidden secrets of the ocean, including sunken cities and stone creatures.

The new attraction can be used in both indoor and outdoor venues and is fully compliant with all safety requirements.

Benoit Cornet, CEO and captain of Creative Minds, comments: "From my sailing experience I can say that a life raft is not something you would like to use, although it will be crucial for survival in case of emergency. The WaterSlider VR however is safely boarded on shore and equipped with fun games and music instead of flares and whistles. The guests who are washed ashore can celebrate at the border of the ocean with tropical beach party vibes."

Polin Group appoints new business development manager



Polin Group has appointed Matteo Ferrarini as business development manager in Italy.

Ferrarini will carry out business development for Polin Waterparks in West Europe and is a knowledgeable commercial and technical professional, with more than 20 years' experience in installation, project management, customer relations, and sales.

Having previously worked as a field engineer and later as

an installation manager, where he was involved in the installation projects of Myrtha Pools, from 2019 to 2022, Ferrarini worked as the commercial director of Clax Italia for swimming pool projects.

Commenting on the new appointment, Dr Baris Pakis, Polin Group's president, said: "By joining our team Polin West Europe office will see the company better serve its customers and partners in Italy. We are very happy to have him in our family after spending so many years working on the same projects."

The appointment is part of Polin Group's drive to strengthen its presence around the world.

The Wave partners with Wavegarden to open new UK & Ireland sites



The Wave, an inland surfing destination located in Bristol, UK, is partnering with wave technology expert Wavegarden, to create five more locations in the UK and Ireland.

The project will cost more than £150m (\$200m) and the six sites are expected to

welcome more than two million guests a year.

The Wave's venue in Bristol features Wavegarden Cove technology; having opened in 2010 it provides inland surfing, focuses on health, wellbeing and a social impact.

Craig Stoddart, CEO of The Wave, commented: "This multi-project agreement further cements our brilliant and exclusive partnership with Wavegarden, and the deal adds significant value to The Wave Group and our shareholders."

Both the Wave and Wavegarden want to open destinations in other European cities.

As Stoddart continued: "We will have five sites open, in planning or being built in the next five years, and we are in the process of actively searching for land. Predictions indicate there will be approximately 100 surf parks operating globally in the next 10 years. The Wave intends to be a leading international player in this market, and we have been preparing ourselves for this ambition for a number of years."

ADG Wave Pool Opens at Aquatopia Australia

Aquatopia public water park near Sydney, Australia, has installed a unique wave pool from Aquatic Development Group.

Using the manufacturer's WaveTek OceanSwell pneumatic wave system technology, it is the only wave pool on the market purposely designed and built to employ waves for three distinct applications: boogie boarding, learn-to-surf, and recreational waves.

With assistance from Swimplex Aquatics, a world-class commercial builder local to the area, the design and build of this project posed many unique challenges for ADG that went beyond the scope of the wave system, including designing the bathymetry for a small footprint pool and incorporating space within the pool for learn-to-swim programming.

To create the wave system ADG developed an enhanced version of its existing Breaker Beach boogie boarding pool and utilised a pneumatic computerised wave technology application that allows for precise wave performance monitoring and timing.

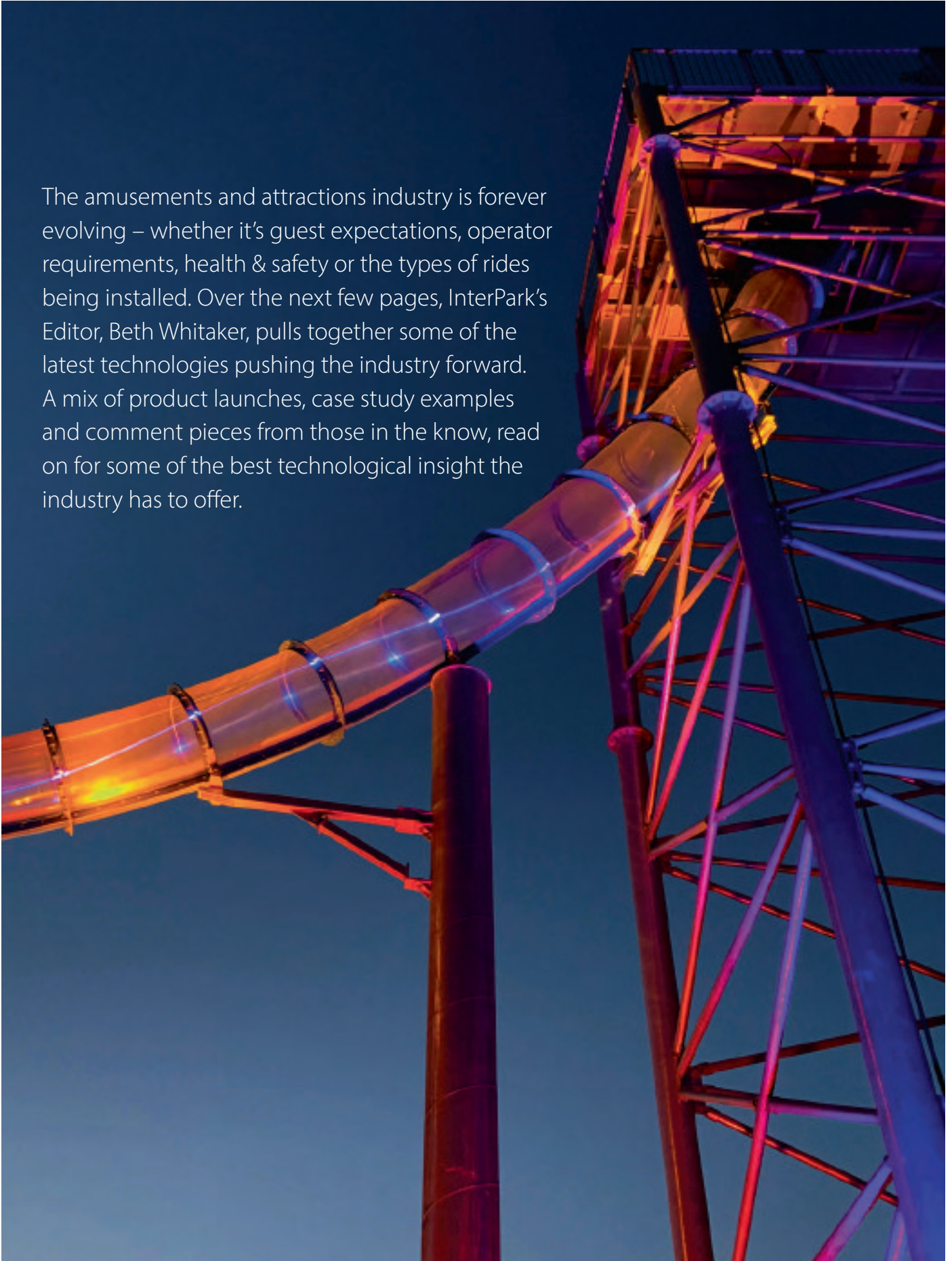
The ongoing Covid situation also brought numerous challenges to this project. ADG's wave engineers have not been able to visit the site at all during the process and much of the work between ADG, Swimplex and staff on the ground at Aquatopia had to be done by incorporating multiple remote technologies to program and commission the wave system.

ADG commented: "Tremendous process has been made throughout the course of the project build despite these obstacles and the wave pool opened during the water park's Grand Opening in November 2021, featuring the boogie boarding and recreational waves."



TECHNOLOGY FOCUS

The amusements and attractions industry is forever evolving – whether it's guest expectations, operator requirements, health & safety or the types of rides being installed. Over the next few pages, InterPark's Editor, Beth Whitaker, pulls together some of the latest technologies pushing the industry forward. A mix of product launches, case study examples and comment pieces from those in the know, read on for some of the best technological insight the industry has to offer.





Glassy by Polin Waterparks

Polin Waterparks is recognised as an official R&D centre and a pioneer in the field of innovative advancement and application of closed-molded manufacturing technology in water slide development. The core of Polin's R&D strategy is its concentration on financial, customer and process perspectives with particular emphasis on learning, dissemination, and innovation. The manufacturer also pioneered the advancement and application of light resin transfer molding (LRTM) in water slide manufacturing and in 2006 converted 100% of its fiberglass production to LRTM — a first in the aquatic-attractions industry. Since then, Polin has regularly introduced innovations, including the

development of special lighting effects, patterned and transparent composites, sound-integrated components, wooden and metallic finishes, 3D water slides, and unique slide designs.

As a result of its dedication to innovation, Polin has now introduced the industry to the Glassy Looping Rocket, its first fully transparent composite water slide, satisfying the need for a better-quality, higher-functioning, and price-advantaged solution.

Polin installed the first version of this new water slide at Candyland Waterpark at the Vogue Hotel in Bodrum, Turkey, in 2020 and with continued positive guest feedback, the ride continues to rocket skyward. On its own, the Looping Rocket is already a high-adrenaline ride due to its ultrahigh, heart-stopping drop. But with its new availability as a fully transparent slide, the Looping Rocket increases guests' adrenaline even more as they zoom through the dark.

Guests already associate water slides with some of the most fun places to cool off during hot daytime hours and now, Polin has given them a reason to stick around for more fun after the sun goes down. With its pulsing, phosphorescent glow, the Looping Rocket becomes an exciting night-time attraction for both riders and those watching. For parks wanting to enhance the guest experience event further, they can add a variety of enhancements to the slide, transforming their venues on an even greater scale and creating a true night to remember for their clientele.

Tech-focussed Product Solutions from Triotech

"A lot of the current technological trends focus on immersion and interactivity," says a Triotech representative, developer of multisensory interactive 3D rides, simulators and attractions. "There are several examples of interactivity that facilitate the guest experience outside of an attraction. For instance, through queue line updates via mobile phone. However, at Triotech we are obviously focused on immersion and interactivity inside an attraction.

"A good example of this is our Maestro hand gesture, which we developed leveraging Leap Motion technology from Ultraleap. Triotech integrated this solution to offer interactivity within an attraction without the need for a "gun-like" device. This has been deployed through all Ninjago - The Ride dark rides at Legoland parks and was a specific request from the client. They wanted an interactive attraction but

because the Legoland parks' demographics is young families, they did not want anything resembling a weapon on the ride.

"We developed technology that allows the guests to play and interact with the content by just moving their hands and arms. An additional advantage for the operators is that there are less parts that can wear down. There are no triggers, no wires and so on. Guests do not touch anything, which means less wear and tear. This is also "covid-friendly".

"In terms of innovation trends, one that has resulted from the challenging times we are going through with the pandemic is the need for a sensible investment to return ratio. Budgets have been affected and operators want to make sure that the money they invest will move the needle so to speak in terms of guest experience, and of capacity (THRC). In other words, investments in attractions are under closer scrutiny.

"One solution we're able to provide is our award-winning Hyper Ride – a first of its kind media-based attraction that delivers a dynamic, action-packed experience in a small footprint. Hyper Ride also features a library of interactive content. These benefits make the attraction accessible to local amusement parks, FECs, shopping malls, and other locations that usually cannot afford the large dark ride attractions found in theme parks. "Hyper Ride provides an anchor attraction with a world-class guest experience that fit a smart budget and a much smaller footprint than conventional dark rides. All these factors contribute to a strong return on investment for the operators that invest in this innovative attraction."





VR LBE attracting new generation of customers

Virtual reality LBE experiences have been making a huge impact on the amusement industry in recent years. Not only has VR LBE been attracting a new generation of customers, but it has been infusing a next level of technology and innovation to raise the bar in fun, immersion, and social experience.

Some of the notable VR LBE systems include compact multiplayer, free roam, and motion simulators. The compact multiplayer systems require a small footprint and introduced the professional-grade high-fidelity headsets to the public by being tethered to high-end PC computers. The free roam systems offer a much larger play space and HP backpacks worn by players contain both the PC computer and battery unit that power the headset. The motion simulators are modified professional-grade racing simulators whose motion is tracked and synchronised with the virtual reality content displayed in the high-fidelity headsets.

Hologate, located in Munich, Germany is a pioneer of the compact multiplayer system with its Arena system, which can be found in over 400 locations in 38 countries worldwide and surpassing the 12 million player milestone! Hologate has been actively developing new products for the LBE space that continually raise the bar and push the envelope of VR technology and innovation.

For example, it recently premiered Hologate X, its free roam system that features full-body tracking, 4D effects that include scent and wind, but its most significant advancement over the present free-roam systems offered by competitors, is that Hologate X is backpack free.

Featuring high-fidelity virtual reality streaming directly into the VR headsets, without the need for backpacks, the players have increased mobility due to having less weight to carry, and the operators have increased throughput and revenue when not having to purchase and suit

up players with the additional equipment or swap out when batteries run low.

Hologate has also raised the bar on technology and innovation with its virtual reality motion simulator, the Blitz, which features a one-metre vertical lift, $\pm 30^\circ$ range of motion in every direction, dual axis steering for manoeuvring left and right or up and down for driving, flying, and underwater experiences, and zero motion sickness due to its proprietary code design and motion-tracking technology. All these features work seamlessly within an immersive virtual reality experience that Hologate also creates in-house.

Virtual Reality LBE systems have greatly improved the business of the operators as it has enabled them to transport their customers into fantastical worlds with immersion that is unlike anything ever experienced before. This offering, along with the ability to provide multiple experiences in a single platform, in turn brings a higher revenue per square foot ratio.





Ocean Park Symbio

Projecting future technologies for evening shows

Rob Paul, Director of LCI Productions explores the new technologies and emerging trends for evening shows including interactivity, artificial intelligence and how to futureproof experiences to maximise ROI.

"Nighttime shows and spectacles have become a popular way to end the day at theme parks. By programming late shows, guests extend their visit and stay for dinner, contributing to F&B revenues, and shop while they wait, enhancing merchandise spend.

The good news for parks, venues or destinations looking to invest in this style of entertainment is that there are options for all budgets and ways to extend and enhance the experience once it is in place to keep narratives evolving and guests coming back for more."

Making a Splash

"Taking their inspiration from architecture around them, dancing fountain shows in their purest form are one of the most classic styles of water show entertainment. They are traditionally set to music and create a mesmerising experience for guests and an uplifting atmosphere.

Using this as a basis, other effects and elements can be added to build on the experience. This includes holograms, lighting and fire effects and 3D projection mapping, where still images or moving media can be projected onto the water or kinetic robots, set build, sculptures and buildings.

We created the world's first 360° water screen show for Ocean Park's end of day experience Symbio. Working alongside Utopia Entertainment, the screen switches between being a projection surface and a dancing fountain that changes in shape and moves in harmony to the music track. The immersion is further enhanced by flame effects, lighting and fireworks."

Evolving Narratives

"One of the key trends in media creation has been the move to real-time media. Unlike a film that has the same set scenes in the same sequence every time, real-time media can change and evolve. This can also be done with the incorporation of AI algorithms, which will update the content within certain aesthetic and technical parameters and allow for other inputs. This is a great way to keep experiences fresh and encourage repeat footfall over days, months, and years.

Adding a level of interactivity and engagement with the guests is a great way to influence the media narrative and customise the experience. This can take place from an app, where messages or photos could be incorporated



to celebrate special occasions, from online voting across social media channels or using interaction from the crowd, such as motion or noise detection, to directing an element of the experience or making decisions for the characters.”

Smart Interactions

“Taking this one step further, AI can be used to truly personalise experiences for each individual guest. This can be within a single experience or linked to a guest’s encounters from the whole day. AI uses a data driven approach to automate outcomes, reducing the amount of physical support that is needed, streamlining operations and ultimately enhancing the experience.”

Futureproofing Experiences

“These shows and the benefits they bring, however, don’t just have to take place within a themed entertainment setting. We are seeing a growing trend for shows being used within placemaking to help create destinations. These draw in the crowds for a longer period than just a few hours in the evening, benefitting the wider hospitality industry.

We recently worked with Bournemouth Coastal BID who, in partnership with Bournemouth Towns Fund, is on a mission to increase the number of people visiting Bournemouth off-season, persuade them to stay longer and encourage visitors and local people to explore more of the coastal strip.

We worked to create and deliver the UK’s first permanently installed outdoor 3D projection mapped show on a high street.



The 18-metre x 11-metre show is akin with what you would expect to experience at a theme park with the combination of 3D visuals and surround audio immersing the audience into the scene. It launched with a ‘Love Boscombe’ theme for Valentine’s Day. The 3D content floats above the surface to include hearts moving across the screen, pulsating, spinning, and circling around the building, images that represent the Boscombe sea front and artwork from local residents that comes to life.

The new show spectacular will play every day until 8pm and will be updated throughout the year to keep guests returning to see the next instalments, futureproofing the experience.

The different shows have already been planned and they also have the capability of adding interaction, Augmented Reality or simply showing live sport, creating a multifunctional space and memorable series of experiences for guests.”

National Gallery Picasso Projections



TECHNOLOGY FOCUS



A large, complex space station or satellite is shown in orbit against a dark, starry background. The station has multiple modules, solar panels, and antennas. The lighting is dramatic, with bright highlights on the metallic surfaces and deep shadows in the surrounding space.

Full dome film takes Planetarium audiences to new space exploration

Moonraker VFX, an award-winning visual effects studio, is launching its first original film this summer for the Planetarium market. *Moonbase: The Next Step*, an immersive 4k Full dome experience, is set to take viewers on a hostile and breath-taking lunar experience. A journey that will push scientific and technological advances to the limit.

The film has been a year in the making and sets a new benchmark for licensable films in the planetarium sector, combining Moonraker's award-winning creative vision and passion for science and natural history television with its extensive experience in immersive visitor attractions.

Moonbase: The Next Step will place viewers in an immersive environment that realises the sheer scale of the Moon itself and the immense task of working and living in such a hostile environment as we embark on the next chapter of space exploration.

Moonraker's decision to take its expertise into

the Full dome market was a natural next step having delighted audiences in television and large screen formats with aspiring photorealistic computer-generated imagery. The new film leans on the studio's wealth of experience in immersing audiences in worlds they can't film on camera, or that existed billions of years ago.

Simon Clarke, Co-founder and Creative Director at Moonraker, commented: "As a studio, we've thrived on the creative challenge that comes with breaking into a new market. Combining the two elements of cinematic visuals and the dome screen can be incredibly powerful - not only enhancing the storytelling experience but immersing visitors in breath-taking worlds of astronomy and planetary science that feel almost tangible. We're looking forward to stretching the boundaries of what's possible in this space."



Evolution in Waves

***InterPark* sat down with Aquatic Development Group (ADG) to look back on how the manufacturer's early innovations in wave technology have had a lasting impact on the industry.**

At the forefront of wave pool technology since the early 1980s, ADG was involved in creating the first set of hydraulic surf pools for the likes of Water World, Geauga Lake and Emerald Point. The IP it developed for those pools has since been implemented in Disney's Typhoon Lagoon, an iconic wave pool that showcased this early entry technology into man-made surfable waves. As well as this, ADG's once patented high-head/low-volume technology has become the backbone for many of the large wave systems found throughout the Asian amusement market today.

What has followed over the next few decades, is a dedicated drive to advance the technology behind producing waves for commercial use. By combining WaveTek's patented technology with ADG's expertise in manufacturing, design, and construction, ground-breaking innovations have emerged that earmarked a new growth in the recreational wave market.

As wave shape and quality began to take centre stage, ADG was first on the scene with pneumatic wave systems, proving it could produce large, consistent waves that dispersed at steady intervals and hold their shape through the length of the pool. These systems were the driving engine behind the first surfable pneumatic wave pools in the 1980's at some of the most renowned venues of the time. Then, in the early 1990's ADG produced its second-generation pneumatic system deployed at Festival Bay, a full-scale model that provided proof of-concept for successful, purpose-built pneumatic surf technology.

ADG has been pivotal in bringing many of today's wave system 'standards' to the industry; for example, stainless-steel construction, multiple wave pattern technologies, and specialty wave chamber arrangements for low

energy usage. The manufacturer was also the first to offer a complete wave pool package — from the planning & design of the pools to the engineering and manufacturing of the waves, to building, installing, and servicing the equipment — making wave pools a commercially viable option, and helping usher in the age of the water park.

Some of ADG's most notable innovations include: the world's first pre-programmable variable wave pattern application for wave pools; introduction of waves to rivers; cost-effective staggered caisson pneumatic system configurations; and the first 6ft (1.8m) high pneumatic roller waves for recreational use.

ADG's advancements in waves has also led to many new and emerging technologies and played a leading role in the evolution of the surfing phenomenon. From standing and sheet wave attractions, to surf pools and rivers, the stationary surf wave market took off in 2003, when ADG partnered with Tom Lochtefeld to transform his idea of a stationary surfable wave and make it a commercially viable attraction. From that, FlowRider was born — a ride with over 225 installations worldwide, 130+ of which have been designed, built, and installed by ADG.

So where do we go from here? Over the past decade ADG waves have expanded internationally with growth in Asia, the Middle East, the Philippines, and Australia and its WaveTek technology can be found in a variety of recreational projects.

With the dramatic growth of surf pools and parks, ADG tells *InterPark* it is continuing to build on its already proven success in the field of surfable wave applications. For over 50 years ADG has been delivering consistently reliable and ground-breaking innovations in the world of waves and the future promises nothing less.



Severn Lamb brings new life to Southend Pier, UK



Regardless of the business sector it's important to keep up with the times or get left behind! Severn Lamb's products although in part, are of a heritage style, with its period trams and turn of the century western style locomotives, inside they are anything but.

Over the years, the UK-based manufacturer has continuously developed its product range and in particular its powertrain systems. Initially, this involved moving away from its steam locomotives to diesel hydraulic variants, with progressively more eco-friendly and efficient Euro 5 and 6 certified powerplants. As always, new technologies became available and eventually, Severn Lamb had clients knocking on the door for non-fossil fuel alternatives.

Over the past 10 years the company has been perfecting its Battery Electric drive system, with almost all its current projects and enquiries now utilising a "clean engine" power solution. Most recently, the manufacturer commissioned two new battery electric, Ultra-light Rail trains at Southend Pier in the UK.

This project is near and dear to Severn Lamb's heart, having originally commissioned the pier's previous trains back in 1986. The two recently de-commissioned diesel trains have stood the test of time providing excellent service over the past 36 years. Originally opened by Princess Anne on 2 May 1986, when the time arose for these trains to be phased out of service, Southend Pier initiated a public tender for the design and manufacture of two new pier trains with a focus on being eco-friendly and in-line with its efforts to become carbon neutral.

"We were delighted to respond to the calling from Southend and subsequently were awarded the contract for the new 21st century trains, with our clean sustainable drive system and latest guest experience

technologies," Patrick Lamb, managing director at Severn Lamb told *InterPark*. "Many of the features on our trains may seem commonplace on mainline rail but are a first for trains of this size and scale. Features such as, automated doors, programmable internal and external LED illumination, passenger USB charging sockets, location-based GPS audio and visual multimedia experiences alongside our state-of-the-art remote diagnostic systems, are all integrated into the tightly packaged trains. Set to serve visitors for years to come the trains will be operational and open to the public this spring.

"We pride ourselves on our ability to adapt technologies, usually out of reach for our clients given the low volume nature of their purchase and endeavour to meet all their requirements at a competitive price point."

As with every project, you learn, develop, and progress your product range and a prime example of this, is Severn Lamb's upcoming project with Dayton History in Ohio, USA. This project will see the manufacturer provide a re-creation of its historical train, which once operated at the site, now with 21st century technology and reliability.

"It couldn't be further apart from the Southend Pier trains visually," says Lamb. "Yet internally it shares our latest eco-friendly battery electric drive systems and cutting-edge operator and visitor amenities."





Bolt – a Maritime Marvel

Meet Bolt from Maurer Rides – the fastest and first roller coaster at sea. Putting cruise ship guests in the driver's seat, Bolt sees them strap in and zoom their motorcycle-style speed machine around an open-air course all while enjoying some amazing 360° ocean views.

A fun, innovative ride that's a feat of modern engineering, Bolt made its debut in July 2021 and has since been awarded 'Best of What's New' by Popular Science Magazine.

"As you're whipping around the Mardi Gras' funnel while riding Bolt, I doubt many people are thinking about how we got the roller coaster built, but this recognition from Popular Science underscores the tremendous work that went into making this happen," said Christine Duffy, president

Ride Features:

- Track length 220m (722ft)
- Base area 84m x 33m
- Above sea level 57m
- Torque 1050Nm
- Max acceleration. 1.2g
- Number of vehicles 2
- Coaster type: Spike
- Drive: Electrical
- Speed 60km/h (38mph)



Special Features:

- World's first roller coaster on a cruise ship
- Interactive speed and acceleration control
- No potential or kinetic energy restrictions
- Corrosion-resistant design against salty sea air
- Special static design according to ship requirements
- Special evacuation solution with tow truck

of Carnival Cruise Line. "While ultimately, we're about providing new ways for our guests to have fun, we're also honoured and appreciative of this incredible recognition for our team."

A marvel in maritime engineering, Bolt is an all-electric roller coaster encompassing an elevated track across Mardi Gras' upper decks with 800ft of exhilarating twists, drops and turns, including a hairpin turn around the ship's iconic funnel. Riders can achieve speeds of up to 40mph as they enjoy views to the sea 187ft below.

Technically, the whole thing is based on the innovative and patented Spike drive from Maurer Rides. Spike is, in simple terms, a further developed gear drive. Its special feature is that it turns roller coaster passengers into real riders. They can brake or accelerate themselves anywhere on the track, with 100% traction and 1.2g of propulsion.

The Storm Coaster launches at Dubai Hills Mall

Emaar Entertainment has revealed the launch of The Storm Coaster, an indoor LSM launch coaster, located at the newly opened Dubai Hills Mall.



A world first roller coaster integrated directly into the structure of a building, pushing the boundary of all aspects of engineering design, The Storm Coaster puts guests in the exciting world of storm chasing.

Utilising Intamin's most powerful LSM drive system, this non-stop, action-packed LSM launch coaster wraps around the entire building it's housed in and has a thrilling 50-metre vertical launch. Riders will experience airtime, speed changes, a sharp drop and unexpected acceleration on a total of 670-metres of track with a top speed of 77km/h. The three 12-seater, themed state-of-the-art trains with ergonomically shaped seats and over-the-shoulder-lap-bar restraints ensure maximum freedom and comfort with the highest safety for the passengers.

Torchlight

By Michael Mascioni

Trackless Horror Dark Ride Breaks New Ground

Despite a constant search for more exciting and distinctive horror attractions in amusement parks, many innovations in that genre have followed a similar pattern. A new horror attraction called Torchlight: Search of the Forest, jointly developed by Simworx, Katapult, and Lagotronics Projects, is designed to truly disrupt the genre with the “first trackless horror dark ride,” as Jonathan Bonner, Katapult’s project producer, puts it.

Simworx is responsible for the ride vehicle, Katapult designed the attraction, and Lagotronics developed the “torchlight, as well as interactive and media production elements” for the project, he explains. “The actual ride experience runs about six minutes, spanning eight scenes,” he says. The track vehicle is omnidirectional, “rotating up to 90° per second, with a maximum speed up to 2.4 metres per second.” According to Bonner, the Katapult team was impressed with the ride vehicle’s “omni direction, motion platform, and great acceleration” when they first took a ride.

The attraction, which is set in a forest called Shadow Pines, challenges guests to “search for lost hikers and spot creatures in the woods using a physical torchlight,” explains Bonner. The incorporation of the torchlight in the physical interactive experience creates distinctive dynamics for the attraction and holds a special allure for guests.

To create a sense of mystery, danger and obscure non-show elements, the torchlight appears to flick on and off, allowing guests to glimpse at parts of the terrain ahead of them, with the attraction also incorporating some AR elements.

As Bonner observes, trackless dark rides have typically focused on gentler stories. In his view, the trackless dark ride platform is particularly “well suited to the horror genre because of its ability to disorientate and thrill guests and ramp up the tension in unpredictable ways.”

The attraction was inspired by a mix of different media, including horror shows, attractions, video games and films such as *The Blair Witch Project* and *Ritual*. The creative team at Katapult was also apparently heavily influenced by the immersive and hallucinogenic qualities of video games and inspired by such theme park attractions as Halloween Horror Night.

According to Phil Higgins, Chief Creative Officer of Katapult: “This project has allowed us to experiment and push the boundaries in terms of what a dark ride can offer. We have put considerable effort into developing ideas for the ride’s queue line, car design, soundscape, and photo opportunities.”

The attraction is geared to “teenage audiences and up,” notes Bonner and while it hasn’t yet been installed in a park, Katapult has been seeking to work with clients on turnkey solutions for the attraction, dependent on their spaces. It also plans to use the same trackless ride vehicle for another attraction outside the horror genre but won’t launch the concept until IAAPA Europe this year.





Benefits of AI Drive eCommerce Platforms

Andy Povey, Managing Director of UK & Ireland for Convio explores the benefits of AI driven eCommerce platforms for increasing revenues, streamlining operations and enhancing the guest experience to keep them coming back for more.

“The Covid pandemic has accelerated digitisation by at least three to four years, making eCommerce a ‘must-have’, rather than a ‘nice-to-have’. As a result, a lot of rushed decisions have been made by operators who were forced to react and implement systems that don’t connect with their wider park ecosystems and workflows.

As we learn to live with Covid we shouldn’t just accept living and working with some of

these sub optimal solutions because the changes in society are here to stay. For example, over 80% of theme park web traffic now comes from mobile users. This makes a seamless, mobile first end-to-end digital journey crucial for venues to deliver high-end customer experiences and drive conversions.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) integrated with eCommerce platforms and guest experience apps

is a huge trend that is helping parks to optimise their footfalls by providing unrivalled insights into real-time performance. Using this knowledge, intelligent data driven decisions can be made to enable better connections with customers."

Streamline Operations

"Our AI targeting uniquely begins before guests have even set foot in the venue. Our platform sits on top of a destination's website and integrates with Google to help increase visibility, optimise online conversation rates, and enable smart targeted messaging to turn occasional visitors into repeat customers.

The data insights also allow venues to plan ahead, see quieter days on the horizon and take action accordingly. When bad weather is expected, for example, AI can help spot that trend and put a dynamic pricing solution in place. Through the connection with marketing, guests who had previously considered visiting can be targeted with an offer of this new price. We have seen this solution help clients grow online revenue annually by 206%!

By having a parkwide eCommerce solution that encompasses operational management, finance and visitor experience features, parks can streamline their operations from one cloud-based platform. We make online easy, can be up and running very quickly and you'll experience no downtime."

Enhance Guest Experiences

"Our solutions are built from the ground up. As a dedicated software and app developer especially for the experience economy, we work with our customers directly to understand their challenges and put solutions in place to answer them.

We design and build from the perspective of guests and are continually optimising through testing and data analysis to ensure that we stay competitive and meet the ever-changing needs of guests.



By ensuring that our app solutions are designed with the guest in mind and have features to keep them engaged before, during and after their visit, we see less than a 5% deletion rate, which is very good compared to the travel industry average of 28% uninstalls.

Destination partners using our App for mobile food ordering are seeing a transaction value increase of an average 25%.

For destinations using the Season Pass, members can easily make reservations for their next visit in just a few clicks, making the app a valuable part of their customer journey and contributing to our high retention rate. This is a far more convenient solution than needing to log in every time and remember passwords, which contributes to overall guest satisfaction and makes them more likely to rebook."

The Connected Future

"Our vision is focused around becoming an agnostic platform that guests can use to book, manage and track all of their leisure destination visits from one place.

Rather than being specific to each location, we can combine every destination into one app, giving guests the ultimate ease of use and convenience. This will bring the benefits of increased repeat visitation, enhanced F&B revenue, and increased guest satisfaction to all venues.

This will also enable cross sell between partners on the platform, smart push notifications based on guest interests and the opportunity to attract new guests with personalised promotions. It will also provide enhanced actionable insights from data gathered through guest profiles and behaviour, providing every partner with extensive tools to target the right audience.



Tom Mehrmann



Tom Mehrmann, President and General Manager, Universal Beijing Resort

Tom Mehrmann has had a colourful career within the parks and attractions industry, which all started back in 1977 when he took a summer job as a sweeper at Knott's Berry Farm. Today, he has just completed a two-year project to get Universal Beijing Resort up and running and open to the public. *InterPark's* Editor, Beth Whitaker sat down with Mehrmann to find out what all these years in the industry have taught him.

Beth Whitaker: When did your career in the parks and attractions industry start?

Tom Mehrmann: I began working in the industry in 1977 at Knott's Berry Farm, with the intention of working for the summer as a sweeper and then looking for a "real job" later. Since then, I've had various career highlights over the years, from being on the leadership team that designed, developed and operated Knott's Camp

Snoopy in Mall of America; to joining Six Flags as VP and GM for the redevelopment, repositioning, rebranding and operation of Marine World Africa USA to Six Flags Marine World, which subsequently has become Six Flags Discovery Kingdom.

Then relocating to Madrid, Spain as VP and GM to lead the design, development and operation of Warner Bros Movie World Madrid, before joining Ocean Park in Hong Kong to lead the redevelopment, repositioning,

rebranding and operation of Ocean Park Corporation in Hong Kong. And then more recently, joining the Universal Parks and Resorts family, as President and GM, and being part of leading the design, development and operation of Universal Beijing Resort, in Beijing, China. And now, at the beginning of this year, stepping into a new role for Universal Parks and Resorts Pacific Rim Division for Universal Beijing Resort, Universal Studios Japan and Universal Studios Hollywood.

BW: Do you have a favourite project?

TM: Every adventure has been a favourite moment at that time. I would have to say that my most recent work in China with Universal Beijing Resort has been one of the more fulfilling experiences, as it was done with the backdrop of working with a state-owned enterprise as a partner, while developing a world-class facility in the capital city of Beijing, in the most populous country in the world, during a global pandemic - and yet we successfully opened on 20 September 2021.

BW: What do you love most about working within the parks and attractions industry?

TM: Here at Universal, we put guests in the middle of amazing stories and adventures. When you see that experience reflected on the faces of our guests, it's just incredible. They are having the time of their lives with their family and friends. Every day is a celebration, every day is different. And everything we do is focused on creating joy for our guests and our team members.

BW: What have been some of the most significant changes you've seen within the industry?

TM: The advent of technology has certainly been one of the most significant changes, as it has enhanced the ability to address everything from safety and guest satisfaction to operating standards and employee engagement. The key is to see technology as the tool for the guest experience and not assume it can become the guest experience.

BW: And how have you seen park guests change within your time?

TM: The biggest changes I have seen around the world is the expectation of our guests towards their visit and experiences. The time available to guests is diminishing so they are seeking great experiences in shorter time frames while still expecting a significant number of



experiences during their visits. It places a different focus on how to design, develop and execute for the guest to ensure they perceive their experiences as value for the money they have invested in their visit.

BW: Tell me more about Universal Beijing Resort – what will it do for the surrounding region?

TM: Universal Beijing Resort is an incredible collection of our best, most compelling, experiences from around the world along with experiences specially created to reflect local culture. It brings our unique theme park entertainment brand to life. We see Universal Beijing Resort as a complement and supplement to other parks and attractions in China. And like any destination or regional theme park, it results in job generation and positive economic impact for the local market.

BW: The first phase of Universal Beijing Resort opened in September – how has it been going?

TM: We are very proud of the park as an example of excellence worldwide in design, development and operation. We have some of the very best Universal Parks and Resorts attractions, along with some custom attractions, which include Jurassic World Adventure; Jurassic Flyers; Kung Fu Panda Land of Awesomeness; Untrainable, the show in our Majestic Theatre; Minion Land; and, the first Transformers Land.



Image Credit
© 2021 Universal Studios

BW: How do you intend to apply your previous experience to your new role?

TM: The new role is overseeing the Pacific Rim parks of Universal Parks and Resorts, which includes Beijing, Osaka and Hollywood. My best contribution is to first seek to understand, then be understood. From that point, it is a matter of implementing best practices and seeking synergy to ensure safe, efficient and effective operations that bring great experiences to our team members and our guests. This is good for our guests and good for our business.

BW: How did Covid-19 impact the project? And how have you seen it affect the industry generally?

TM: The global pandemic has touched every park in the world and impacted the operation of each park, probably forever. It impacted our ability to build the resort in Beijing, to get vendors and suppliers to Beijing, to generate national and international attention and travel to the park. I am proud of the team and the government partnership for finding ways to work through the issues. The new normal that will emerge will be more focused on hygiene and health and safety of team members and guests in the operating protocols, the entry procedures, ticket selling, transaction management and the experiences offered in the park.

Out of every crisis comes opportunity and the key will be to find the opportunities in all countries, cultures and parks to deliver an experience that meets and exceeds the guest expectations, as they will change going forward. But here is what I also know, people will always seek unique opportunities to come together and create fun, powerful, memories with their family and friends. And we are especially good at that.

BW: What can we expect from Universal Beijing Resort moving forward?

TM: As travel opens and pandemic prevention protocols relax, I would expect the park to be introduced to the world and for everyone to experience the incredible resort that has been developed in Beijing, China.

Personally Speaking

Not a lot of people know this but I am very good at...Enjoying my time off, when I have it.

The most interesting place I've ever been, is...My own home, as I have been working abroad for 22 years and now, I am back home in California.

The last book I read was...The Outsiders by William Thorndike

During Covid-19 lockdowns I spent my time...Focusing 100% on the development, opening and operation of Universal Beijing Resort for the two-year period between the outbreak of Covid-19 and the time I returned to the US for the new role.

The person who has influenced me the most is...There are many, but beyond immediate family, I would say John Wooden, the world-famous former basketball coach of UCLA.

If I wasn't working in the amusements industry I would...Be a professional NBA player, although I was never quite good enough, or tall enough, but we can all dream.

I really dislike...Whining.

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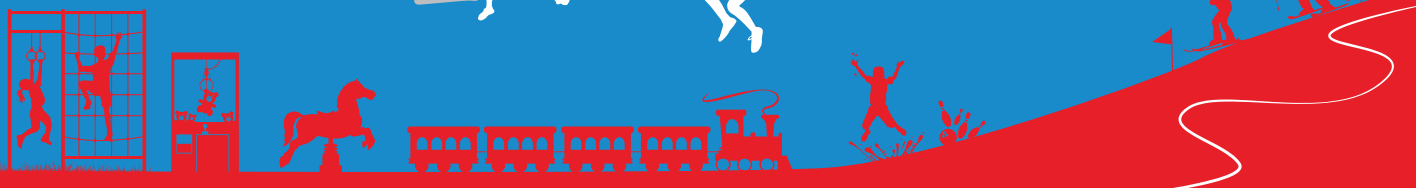
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Peppa Pig Theme Park Opens in Orlando

By Emma Davidson



The world's very first Peppa Pig theme park opened its doors to the public last month in Orlando, Florida. The brand-new park has opened as a Certified Autism Center and shared this commitment along with a reveal of its newly designed ride vehicle, which allows for increased accessibility for children with wheelchairs, to the public on 24 February 2022.

A full accessibility guide along with other longer-term plans for continued updates are also in development for all the park's experiences, including its six rides, six themed playscapes and water play area.

Families making the trip to the park will get the chance to enjoy brilliant views from the Balloon Ride that features whimsical baskets crafted to look like a hot air balloon, specially designed to allow children who use wheelchairs to board the 'balloon basket' without needing to transfer.

Merlin Entertainments' creative and project delivery team, Merlin Magic Making, along with the ride manufacturers at Technical Park worked closely to develop this adaptation to a fan-favourite ride, ensuring more children could experience it safely. This is just one part of a larger commitment from Merlin Entertainments to develop inclusive attractions that can be enjoyed by all guests.

In addition to this exciting ride, the playful park's marquee water play attraction, the Muddy Puddles Splash Pad has been developed with child-friendly accessibility in mind. The ground is specially graded for wheelchair use and several heights of water play elements have been choreographed for the enjoyment of all guests and all abilities. This includes a tunnel of water hoops that can be navigated in a wheelchair and additional interactive splash surprises at varying height levels.

Back on dry land, guests can discover additional fun adventures that are sized with these same guiding principles of accessibility in mind. Children in wheelchairs will be able to manoeuvre and explore the sensory-rich trail of Peppa's Pedal Bike Tour without leaving their own wheelchairs.





The enchanting, greenery-covered maze walls of George's Fort have also been mapped out to all ADA (American with Disabilities Act) guidelines and standards for accessible design. Additionally, all the Fun Fair free game counters have been constructed at accessible heights to be easily enjoyed by everyone.

Another ride making its debut at Peppa Pig Theme Park is the Daddy Pig Rollercoaster that has been designed and developed by Zamperla. The experience starts with a walk through of Peppa Pig's house and guests can then board the coaster vehicles, which are modelled after the family's car.

"This project was a lot of fun," says Alberto Ferri, Zamperla's Roller Coaster Division Director. "We really enjoy projects like this. This is the largest pig we have designed for one of our coasters, but our team has experience with detailed theming and it was a unique challenge. Plus, we have enjoyed updating our classic Family Coaster, so that it remains state-of-the-art."

The park wanted more than a traditional oval-style children's coaster and Zamperla's roller coaster engineering team answered the call. It updated and expanded its classic Family Coaster by adding a child-sized launch to the middle of the experience, making the end result a unique attraction.

"This coaster saw us go back to the drawing board in a lot of ways," said Adam Sandy, Zamperla's Roller Coaster Sales & Marketing Director. "We not only added the launch, but there were several additional technical improvements. Our Family Coaster system now features individual lap bars, magnetic brakes and booster tires for the lift and launch. Most importantly, the chassis saw significant improvements that reduced the cost of ownership and time required for annual non-destructive testing."

The family coaster also features a transfer bench that easily attaches to the vehicle. Riders that require wheelchair access can slide over the bench and into their seat. "Our roller coaster division is constantly working to ensure that the largest number of guests possible can enjoy our attractions," adds Ferri.

Other attractions at Peppa Pig Theme Park include the Grampy Rabbit's Dinosaur Adventure and Grandad Dog's Pirate Boat Ride, both manufactured by German company, Metallbau. The Grampy Rabbit's Dinosaur Park explores a dinosaur quest that takes families on a journey past volcanoes and through pre-historic mountains, and the Grandad Dog's Pirate Boat Ride sees guests set sail for Pirate Island to dig for buried treasure and build sandcastles on its sandy beaches.

In addition to these, guests will also find Mr Bull's High Striker – a ride that ascends guests into the sky – and Peppa's Pedal Bike Tour, which takes families on a journey through a camping adventure in the woods. Smaller cyclists can enjoy George's Tricycle Trail, a shorter pedal path adventure on tricycles.

Other attractions around the park include the Campervan, Cinema, Fun Fair, George's Fort, Grandpa Pig's Greenhouse, Madame Gazelle's Nature Trail, Mr Potato's Showtime Arena, Peppa Pig's Treehouse and Rebecca Rabbit's Playground.

A delightful menu of child-friendly foods awaits guests at Peppa Pig Theme Park, too. The all-new restaurant, Miss Rabbit's Diner, is a sit-down, quick service location that offers a satisfying selection of American food from classic family favourites and handheld sandwiches to an assortment of fresh, healthy choices and desserts.

As the park is a Certified Autism Center (CAC) it partnered with the International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards (IBCCES) to gain this accreditation.

Moving forward, IBCCES will work with the Peppa Pig Theme Park to conduct staff-wide autism sensitivity and awareness training in addition to making more tangible updates to the in-park communications. The training reviews the areas of sensory awareness, environment, communication, motor and social skills, programme development and emotional awareness and includes a comprehensive autism competency exam.

Alongside staff training, IBCCES is also conducting an in-depth review of the new park to develop a detailed Sensory Guide. This guide features a review of every attraction by providing insight on how a

child with sensory processing issues may be affected. This will create a comprehensive planning tool that will provide the information needed to make it easier for parents and families to plan activities that satisfy their child's specific needs and accommodations.

As well as these accessibility enhancements and CAC program, a

comprehensive Accessibility Guide is also in development for Peppa Pig Theme Park. This planning tool will help all families be aware of the many services and accessibility options that will be available, so that they can plan the ultimate day of adventure for their child.



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Linnanmäki Amusement Park, Finland

By Emma Davidson

Linnanmäki is Finland's oldest and most popular amusement park, located in the capital city of Helsinki. Owned and operated by the non-profit Children's Day Foundation, the park opened its gates over 70 years ago in 1950 and has been attracting guests looking for fun ever since.

The park was established all those years ago by six charity organisations, Barnvårdsföreningen i Finland, (Finland's longest running child welfare organisation); The Federation of Mother and Child Homes and Shelters; The Central Union for Child Welfare; Parasta Lapsille and Save the Children, with the aim of raising money for Finnish child welfare funds. Over the course of its operation, the park has donated more than €120m to this very important cause.

Built on a hill, the park derives its name from Vesilinnanmäki, which, in Finnish, translates to Water Castle Hill, which is the name locals gave to the hilly area in the early 20th century since it has two water towers, built in 1876 and 1938. The water towers are no longer in their original use and because of the zoning plan of the city they are not allowed to be demolished. Currently one of the water towers houses an indoor roller coaster (Linnunrata eXtra), that offers VR-glasses with three different contents for the ride. The other water tower is used as a technical maintenance hall.

Linnanmäki currently holds over 40 rides with something for everyone, including colourful carousels for children, fun attractions for

families to enjoy together, as well as thrilling rides for adrenaline seekers. Some of the 40 rides at the park include the children's ride Helikopteri, a ride which lets small guests experience a smooth ascent into the skies while spinning. Whoever is sat in the front seat can also pilot the gondola during the ride, getting great views right across Alppiharju, the sub-district in which the park exists.

There is also HipHop, which lifts riders to a height of eight-metres, the Kammokuja a terrifying 3D experience, and the park's signature, wooden roller coaster ride, Vuoristorata, that has delighted visitors ever since it opened back in 1951. The ride still employs traditional brake masters controlling the speed while standing in the last carriage – which in today's modern world is quite the rarity on roller coasters.



PARK LIFE

Another significant, signature ride and one of the newest at the park, is the Intamin double launch coaster, Taiga, which opened in 2019. Taiga is a terrific ride that launches twice and sees guests upside down four times per ride. The top speed of this attraction is 106 km/h, and it really plays with the feeling of weightlessness. The ride was specifically designed for Linnanmäki, and, in its opening year, Taiga won several awards, including Europe's Best New Coaster by European Star Award.

Linnanmäki works with various manufacturers for its rides, including: Intamin, Mack, Huss, Moser Rides, Technical Park, Zamperla, Maurer, S&S Worldwide, Gosetto, and Zierer. Constantly working on its ride line-up, Linnanmäki aims to develop the amusement park every year, with new additions revealed only ahead of each season.

Within the gates of Linnanmäki there is also a Sea Life centre and the second largest theatre in the country, the Peacock Theatre, both operating all year round. The Sea Life Centre is a fun place to discover fascinating underwater worlds that are home to tropical fish and starfish, as well as sharks and rays.

The exhibitions held at the Sea Life centre present many species whose environments are threatened by pollution and other environmental damage, with the Helsinki branch also being part of the pan-European

Sea Life aquarium chain. The aim is to educate visitors about the need for protecting the sea environment.

The Peacock Theatre holds a selection of eclectic, entertaining performances that cater for all in the family and is one of the main stages of the Finnish Comedy Theater in Helsinki, offering performances in various forms since the amusement park opened. The mission of the theatre is to create high-quality, diverse and relevant cultural experiences for audiences of all ages, both current and timeless, in a comedic and entertaining form. Through its activities, the theatre promotes the well-being of the widest possible audience and is thereby involved in building a better society.

Alongside the rides and various entertainment options, Linnanmäki also offers special events throughout the year, such as the unique 'iik!week' horror festival in September, which sees the park filled with zombies and other scary characters that aim to terrify guests in and out of the eight different live haunted houses. The season then ends in October with the popular Carnival of Light where the amusement park is lit with unique light installations and other exciting immersive elements.

Ample F&B offerings at a park are just as important as the entertainment and at Linnanmäki the options are extensive, something



new to try introduced every year. The park also ensures that it offers treats for different dietary restrictions, such as gluten-free and lifestyle choices, such as the growing popularity in a vegan diet. There are five restaurants and two cafes, as well as several concession stands where guests can choose from a wide selection of F&B options including: pizza; Asian wok dishes; Linnanmäki's famous twirled french fries; and its special sour candy floss. And when it gets to the summer months, the Keidas terrace restaurant in the centre of the park comes alive with music, while serving thirst-quenchers and treats perfect to enjoy in the summer sun.

Open six months of the year from April to October, Linnanmäki attracts around 1.2 million visitors from Finland and neighbouring countries, each year. Employing 70 members of year-round, full-time staff, the park also takes on around 600 seasonal 'Fun Master' staff members, over half of which are return employees from previous seasons. Easily accessible by public transport from the centre of Helsinki, there are several hotels within a short walk of the park.

By providing the families of visitors with a fun-filled amusement park that they want to visit time and time again, Linnanmäki has become so much more than somewhere for people to spend their leisure time. For example, thanks to the monetary support through the park's operations, one of the six Children's Day Foundation's charity organisations, Mannerheim League for Child Welfare, has been able to upkeep and develop low-threshold crisis support through digital services for children, teenagers and families in different parts of Finland for more than 70 years, together with nearly 30,000 volunteers.

Among Linnanmäki's main partners are: SOK/HOK Elanto, Unilever Finland and Hartwall. As partners, these companies are supporting the valuable child welfare work with their monetary and marketing contributions. A socially responsible park, as Ulla Siimes, executive director at The Central Union for Child Welfare, another of the six Children's Day Foundation's charity organisations, puts it: "I can confidently say that



Linnanmäki may be one of the most responsible amusement parks in the world. Over the course of the years, so many children and families have received help through the donations of Linnanmäki. It has had a massive positive impact on children and families' rights and welfare. That wouldn't be possible without Linnanmäki's determination for improving the park year after year.

"Linnanmäki has taken a lot of other actions in the wider field of responsibility - acting truly in accordance with its values. I hope that Linnanmäki remains the lovable, responsible amusement park that so many children and parents choose as their number one summer holiday destination."



At a glance

Opened in 1950

Over 40 rides

Oldest amusement park in Finland

Owned & operated by non-profit organisation Children's Day Foundation

Annual attendance – 1.2 million

Over €120m donated to charity

Ride suppliers: Intamin, Mack, Huss, Moser Rides, Technical Park, Zamperla, Maurer, S&S Worldwide, Gosetto, and Zierer

PARK
LIFE



Interesting Times

By Dennis Spiegel

Image courtesy
Six Flags

Our industry has never gone through more interesting times than we are currently experiencing. Operators all over the globe are moving and shaking in diverse ways, which is sending many different signals about our business. Let me touch on a few examples.

Six Flags, under the new leadership of Selim Bassoul, just released 2021 fourth quarter and full year performance. There were really no shockers in the information; rather, it was very much in line with expectations. Attendance in 2021 was down compared to 2019 by approximately five million guests (the 2020 anomaly is a non-comparison year). Revenues saw an upward rise by US\$9m. Net income was down by US\$49m due to the attendance decline in 2021 from 2019, and adjusted EBITDA saw a decrease of US\$29m compared to 2019.

Surprising? Not really, taking into consideration the shift in calendar days, the loss of pre-booked groups due to Covid, and, in general, the impact the industry saw across the board worldwide.

What was interesting to see is the new CEO's forward look after his first 100 days on the job. To say he has taken this time to alter the operating strategies and tactics for Six Flags is an understatement. What I found very interesting are the strategies he has laid out for the company this coming year. To me, it looks like the same old bowl of potato salad with a new dollop of mayonnaise on top! Goals are to handle crowded queue lines and long lines, go after families with strollers, consider price increases, and improve food quality. Nothing wrong with these goals, but they are the foundations of any park's strategy and have been voiced multiple times by previous Six Flags leaders. The new CEO also stated that Six Flags has enough rides and that rides do not really boost attendance. In my experience, rides and new attractions are the life blood of our industry. We live on repeat visitation, and repeat visitation is generated by new rides and attractions.

Another interesting point is the CEO's indication that they are shifting to social media. Duh! Parks have been doing that for 10+ years. He also made a comment of reducing corporate and giving parks more control! This table tennis game has been going back and forth at Six Flags for over 25 years. The parks are dizzy from this single continuing change. He also said that season pass holders have value, but single-day visitors spend more money. This is a well-known fact among regional park operators.

I do not want to seem cynical. I wish Six Flags great luck, but having known that company for 52 years, the message I just saw delivered by the new CEO is passe.

Looking at the recent activity over at SeaWorld and Cedar Fair, things have really been interesting there as well. The recent attempt of SeaWorld's Chairman to acquire Cedar Fair came as a surprise to the industry. If you are familiar with SeaWorld's Chairman, Scott Ross, he has lusted over Cedar Fair for years, going back to his days working at Apollo Global Management. He is a smart person and recognised as having operated a well-run organisation years ago. At the time of writing this article, SeaWorld produced an announcement indicating a deal could not be reached with Cedar Fair, and the takeover attempt was over. Possibly, yes, though we shall see.

What is really interesting about SeaWorld is its incredible rebound, particularly as it relates to its stock price. Covid and Ukraine aside, this year has seen SeaWorld's stock (SEAS) range over 52 weeks from US\$41.94 to US\$72.07. In September of 2019, it was as low as US\$11.02. Quite a comeback. Even with an attendance decrease of US\$2.4 million



guests in 2021 over 2019, revenues increased by US\$105 million, and adjusted EBITDA increased by US\$205 million, an increase of 45%.

It is also interesting to compare the difference between SeaWorld's and Six Flags' short term improvement plans. They both seem to be heading in different directions. One is a regional theme park operator, and the other a hybrid tourist/regional operator. This will have some bearing on decisions, but there are also "basics" that apply equally to each operator.

At this early point in the 2022 season, we are seeing several issues of concern that could affect business if they remain in play. These issues are the Ukrainian invasion, higher inflation, higher wages, labour shortages, and high oil pricing. At this time, Covid does not seem to be a major impediment, but time will tell. This week, another variant was reported; however, too early to register its impact.

There are going to be more attempts at park mergers, not only in the USA but Europe as well. The leisure industry in Europe is at an age when these types of discussions begin to emerge between operating entities. This too will be interesting to observe. Prepare yourselves, it is going to happen on a grander scale than we have previously seen, and it is coming to markets near you!

I should also point out that Asia is not quite mature enough for the M&A table tennis game, but is getting close. These are interesting times in which we live, work and operate leisure attractions. There are really no signs of stoppage. With India, Africa, and more Middle Eastern areas developing plans for projects, we are set for growth for quite a long time. The last two years is certainly one of the most interesting periods in which I have lived and worked. Some good, some bad, and some really ugly! Interesting times for sure.



About ITPS

Dennis Spiegel, past Chairman of the International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (IAAPA), is Founder & CEO of International Theme Park Services, Inc. (ITPS), where "FUN IS A SERIOUS BUSINESS." ITPS is globally the leisure industry's leading independent, full-service consulting firm. Located in Cincinnati, Ohio, USA, ITPS is uniquely qualified to assist in all aspects of entertainment project development, and has worked on over 500 projects in over 50 countries since its inception in 1983. **The corporate website is <http://www.interthemepark.com> and the staff can be reached by email at itps@interthemepark.com**



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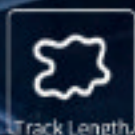
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